

CHAPTER 2

RHYTHMIC TENSION / RESOLUTION



Almost all types of music — whether it's pop, rock, jazz, or classical — have places where musical tension is built up and then released, like the twists and turns of a good book or movie plot. This helps create the focal points we have been talking about.

As mentioned in Chapter One, pop & rock songs are definitely meant to grab the listener's attention, so songwriters try to carefully manipulate the tension so that it peaks at the end of one section (verse or pre-chorus), followed by a satisfying resolution at the beginning of the next section (usually a chorus). That exact moment of maximum tension, the musical hook, can be very arresting, and often a listener that has begun to daydream will tune back in for those few seconds.

Let's say you are a musician playing in the corner of a bar room at a local restaurant. The audience is busy talking and drinking, and not paying much attention to you while you perform. However, when you get to that all-important entrance to the chorus with your dramatic hook phrase, people in the middle of a conversation will actually turn and look your way for at least a moment, even if the reaction is only subconscious. If you have a strong enough hook, you will grab their attention for more than a few seconds, and they might even drop their conversation to listen closer to your music.

The only type of music that doesn't call attention to itself is music meant specifically to be in the background. This would include songs for relaxation or meditation - often labeled as "trance" or "chill" in Spotify playlists. These songs run very smoothly, with no peaks or valleys or focal points that will distract you from your quiet reverie.

There are many musical devices that create moments of tension and resolution. If you are acquainted with Roman numeral analysis, you are probably familiar with harmonic tension, where the dominant V chord resolves to the tonic I. However, we will save the discussion of harmonic tension for the next chapter. Instead, we'll start here with a simpler kind of tension created by rhythmic elements like stop time, “disjointed” rhythm patterns, and suspension of the main rhythmic groove.



Stop time is a brief break in the main instrumental accompaniment, usually on beats 2, 3, and 4 of a single measure. However, the pause can last for up to four bars in some songs. Of course the term is a bit misleading - the background instruments may stop playing, but like any rest in standard notation, the beat keeps going during the silence and the tempo is maintained. Also, the vocal melody or drums may continue while the other instruments pause. This rhythmic device can be a brief, but very effective way to create a focal point because the abrupt break in the song's instrumental flow obviously attracts attention. If the pause is long enough, a great deal of tension is created as we anticipate the return of the established rhythm pattern.

STOP TIME BEFORE CHORUS

Stop time is often used right before the chorus which highlights the chorus entrance. This can be heard on the song “I’m a Believer,” a hit for the Monkees in 1966, and later used in 2001 for the movie Shrek. On the last measure of the verse, all instruments hit the downbeat, followed by 3 beats of rest. Note that the vocals continue through the rest. Start listening at **0:16**.

“I’m A Believer” - The Monkees - 1966

ver - G major
ch - G mixo



1

For AUDIO, see the “Song Examples” playlist in the right sidebar, and click on track 1 song title. To navigate within the audio track, slide the progress bar to the desired starting point.

p.3

C G C G

Love was out to

0:16 end of VERSE

C G D

..... dreams. Then I saw her

STOP TIME

G7 C G C G7 C G C

face

RESOLUTION

0:28 CHORUS

The next example contains a variation, featuring drum hits on beats 1, 2, and 3 of the stop time measure. Note the song title at the chorus entrance. Start listening at **0:35**.

"Slow Hands" — Niall Horan — 2017

C major



C Am F G

and I hope you feel want you baby

STOP TIME

0:36 end of VERSE

F G Am

Slow, slow hands dirty laundry

RHYTHMIC RESOLUTION

0:47 CHORUS with title

This song by Saint Motel features a rest on beats 3 and 4 of the stop time measure (at the end of the pre-chorus). Notice that there are no vocals during the rest, but a single handclap punctuates the silence on beat 4. Start listening at **0:26**.

"Move" — Saint Motel — 2016

C dorian



— **0:26** (verse)

— **0:45** (pre-chorus) Last bar has **STOP TIME** with a single handclap on beat 4.

TENSION

— **0:54** (chorus)

RESOLUTION

Pat Benatar's "Heartbreaker" also has a two-beat rest before the chorus, although the tempo is much faster than the previous song. This makes the stop time very short, but surprisingly effective at highlighting the chorus entrance. Start listening at **0:13**.

"Heartbreaker" — Pat Benatar — 1979

F blues rk



— **0:13** (verse)

— **0:25** (pre-chorus) Last bar has **STOP TIME** on beats 3 and 4.

TENSION

— **0:39** (chorus) with song title

RESOLUTION

Additional songs with STOP TIME BEFORE CHORUS

1964	<i>Glad All Over</i>	Dave Clark Five
1984	<i>Heart of Rock & Roll</i>	Huey Lewis & The News
2002	<i>Don't Let Me Get Me</i>	Pink
2010	<i>Gonna Get Over You</i>	Sarah Bareilles
2010	<i>This Is Our Moment</i>	Kenny Chesney
2011	<i>Set Fire to the Rain</i>	Adele
2012	<i>50 Ways to Say Goodbye</i>	Train
2012	<i>Everybody Talks</i>	Neon Trees
2014	<i>Spotlight</i>	Shakira
2017	<i>Smooth Like the Summer</i>	Thomas Rhett
2020	<i>Bragger</i>	Kelsea Ballerini
2023	<i>Kismet</i>	The Beaches

STOP TIME SEQUENCE with 12-BAR BLUES FORM

Many songs that use the standard 12-bar blues form have a series of stop times on the first 4 bars of the form, featuring punctuations on the downbeat of each bar (shown below), while the vocals continue. This creates a unique tension — almost like a sputtering car that can't quite get started. When the instrumental groove finally kicks in on the 5th measure, it makes the feeling more powerful and satisfying.

As the 12-bar form repeats over and over, the first four bars usually feature a new set of words each time, functioning like a verse. In contrast, the last 8 bars remain the same each time, acting like a chorus or refrain. This 12-bar stop-time / refrain form was very common in the early days of rock & roll, as seen in several of the examples below.

We'll start with Bill Haley's "Rock the Joint," a song that actually pre-dates the rock revolution of 1955 by three years. Start listening at **0:20**.

"Rock The Joint" — Bill Haley & The Comets — 1952

A blues



A

STOP TIME sequence TENSION

0:20 VERSE 2

D A

RHYTHMIC RESOLUTION

0:26 REFRAIN (steady rhythm resumes)

E A

This Little Richard song features stop time on only the first 3 bars. Since the instruments continue to rest through bar 4, extra tension is created as we wait a bit longer for the instruments to return.

"Long Tall Sally" — Little Richard — 1956

F blues



F

STOP TIME sequence TENSION

0:00 VERSE

Bb F

RHYTHMIC RESOLUTION

0:05 REFRAIN (steady rhythm)



On the following example from Eric Clapton, the first verse is similar to the previous Little Richard song with 3 stop times over 4 bars. However, verse 2 is twice as long, with 7 stops over 8 bars. Start listening at **0:51**.

"I'm Tore Down" — Eric Clapton — 1994
(orig. Freddie King)

C blues



— **0:52** (verse 2) Sequence of **7 STOP TIMES** **TENSION**

— **1:07** (refrain) **RESOLUTION** with song title

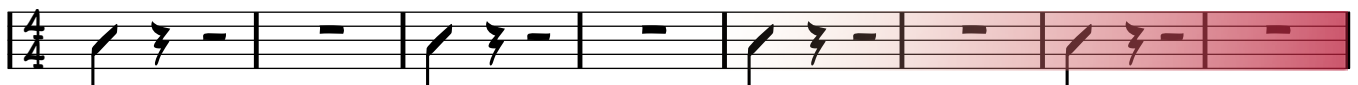
The next song adds two variations to the stop time line. First, the line is basically doubled, extending to 8 bars with stop time on every other bar. Second, the rhythm instruments (drums and handclap) continue through the entire first line with a steady rhythmic flow, and the stop time is only defined by the punctuating guitar notes.

"Rockin' Robin" — Bobby Day — 1958

G blues



G (guitar punctuations)



0:10 VERSE

0:22 REFRAIN with song title

RESOLUTION

Additional songs with STOP TIME SEQUENCE in 12-BAR FORM

1956	<i>Too Much Monkey Business</i>	Chuck Berry
1958	<i>Good Golly Miss Molly</i>	Little Richard
1958	<i>Hard Headed Woman</i>	Elvis Presley
1959	<i>What'd I Say</i>	Ray Charles
1960	<i>Money</i>	Barret Strong
1965	<i>Seventh Son</i>	Johnny Rivers

STOP TIME BEFORE TITLE PHRASE

As we have heard, stop time often highlights the title of the song at the entrance of the chorus. However, there is another common place to sing the title words — at the very end of a chorus, refrain, or even a verse. In this case, the title emphatically concludes the section, like a period finishing a sentence. This can help the listener remember it, since the words of the title stay fresh in our mind as the singing stops. If the song has a brief instrumental space (1 to 4 bars - no vocals) between sections, we even have time to repeat the title in our head before the next section starts. Not surprisingly, stop time can also be used to highlight these “closing titles.”

Here's a great example by the Georgia Satellites. Note how the stop time highlights the title phrase.

“Keep Your Hands to Yourself” - Georgia Satellites - 1987

A blues



— 0:00 (verse) 12-bar form

— 0:30 (end of verse) **STOP TIME** on bar 11 with title phrase **TENSION**

— 0:33 (4-bar instrumental interlude)

RESOLUTION

— 0:42 (next verse)

The next 12-bar classic by James Brown features stop time on bar 10. Once again, the title is sung during the stop time pause. Also note the sudden burst of guitar strumming immediately after the title. This guitar part functions like an alarm clock going off, drawing even more attention to the overall focal point. Then a final horn blast wraps things up with an exclamation point.

"Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" - James Brown - 1965

E blues



0:00 VERSE

E B A

STOP TIME TENSION

Ain't no drag papa's got a brand new song title

E (GUITAR STRUMMING) B (HORN HIT)

bag

— 0:26 (verse 2)

RESOLUTION

The 1987 song "Walk Like an Egyptian" has a slight variation. The stop time lasts for 4 bars at the end of the verse. Most of the instruments stop, but a light rhythm continues on a single shaker during the title phrase. Notice the short instrumental interlude right after the title, which allows the listener time to repeat the title in their head before the next verse starts.

"Walk Like an Egyptian" - The Bangles - 1987

B mixo, E mixo



— 0:14 (verse)

— 0:42 (end of verse) **STOP TIME for 4 bars** during song title. Light rhythm continues with shaker only.

TENSION

— 0:47 (4-bar instrumental interlude)

RESOLUTION

— 0:56 (verse 2)

The stop time pause on this next example lasts for only 3 beats with a fast tempo, but it is still effective at highlighting the title words. Once again there is an instrumental space right after the title. Start listening at **0:33**.

"Everybody Wants You" — Billy Squier — 1982

A blues



— 0:33 (last half of verse 1)

— 1:00 (end of verse) **STOP TIME for one bar** during song title.

TENSION

— 1:02 (4-bar instrumental interlude)

RESOLUTION

— 1:10 (verse 2)

This last example has two focal points with stop time — one at the chorus entrance, and another at the end of the chorus when the title is sung. With a song name like "Stop, Drop, & Roll," could there be any doubt there would be stop time at the title phrase?

"Stop, Drop, + Roll" — Dan + Shay — 2014

D major



— 0:10 (verse)

— 0:31 (end of verse) brief **STOP TIME** **TENSION**

— 0:32 (chorus) **RESOLUTION**

— 0:51 (end of chorus) **STOP TIME** during title phrase **TENSION**

— 0:54 (instrumental interlude) **RESOLUTION**

— 1:05 (verse 2)

Additional songs with STOP TIME at TITLE PHRASE

1957	<i>All Shook Up</i>	Elvis Presley
1958	<i>Great Balls of Fire</i>	Jerry Lee Lewis
1959	<i>Teenager in Love</i>	Dion & The Belmonts
1962	<i>Crying in the Rain</i>	Everly Brothers
1965	<i>Love Potion #9</i>	The Searchers
1970	<i>Make It with You</i>	Bread
1972	<i>From the Beginning</i>	Emerson, Lake, & Palmer
1977	<i>I Just Want to Make Love to You</i>	Foghat
1990	<i>Hard to Handle</i>	The Black Crowes
1999	<i>Man! I Feel Like a Woman</i>	Shania Twain
2008	<i>Freeze</i>	T-Pain ft. C. Brown
2011	<i>Made in America</i>	Toby Keith



Short **drum fills** of 2 to 4 beats can also be used to draw attention to the chorus entrance or the title phrase. Quite often the drum fills will occur during a stop time break, as on this next song by Cake. Start listening at **0:22**.

"The Distance" — Cake — 1996

E minor



— **0:22** (mid-verse)

— **0:43** long, slow **DRUM FILL** with **STOP TIME** **TENSION**

— **0:45** (chorus) **RESOLUTION** with title phrase

On the next example, drum fills and stop time are again combined, but the fill only lasts 2 beats and the tempo is faster.

"Devil Woman" — Cliff Richard — 1976

D blues rk



— **0:17** (verse)

— **0:33** (pre-chorus) short **DRUM FILL** with **STOP TIME** **TENSION**

— **0:50** (chorus) **RESOLUTION** with title phrase

Here's an example where the fill and stop time are used at the end of the refrain to highlight the song title. Start listening at **0:49**.

"Superstition" — Stevie Wonder — 1973

Eb minor



- 0:49 (verse 2)
- 1:09 (refrain)
- 1:16 (end of refrain) **DRUM FILL** with **STOP TIME** and title phrase
- 1:18 (4-bar instrumental interlude) **RESOLUTION**
- 1:27 (verse 3)

TENSION**RESOLUTION**

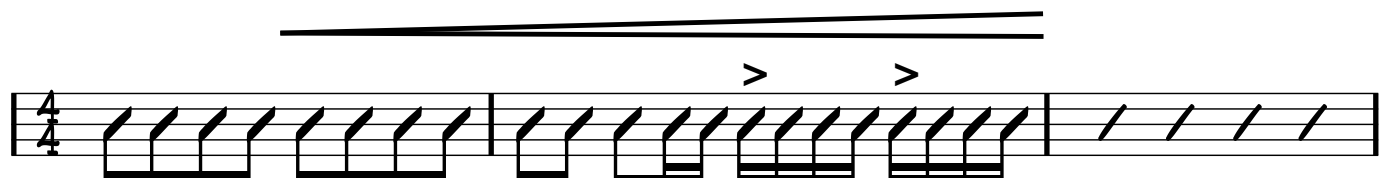
On the next song, there is no stop time. At the end of the pre-chorus you will notice that the drums and guitar build with a steady, repeated beat that leads into the drum fill announcing the chorus.

"She's So High" — Tal Bachman — 1999

A major



- 0:08 (verse)
- 0:23 (pre-chorus)



0:37 end of PRE-CHORUS

DRUM FILL**CHORUS****TENSION****RESOLUTION**

Additional songs with DRUM FILL

1963	<i>Monkey Time</i>	Major Lance
1966	<i>You Baby</i>	The Turtles
1967	<i>Ruby Tuesday</i>	The Rolling Stones
1975	<i>When Will I Be Loved</i>	Linda Ronstadt
1991	<i>Something to Talk About</i>	Bonnie Raitt
2001	<i>I'm Like a Bird</i>	Nelly Furtado
2007	<i>Sunshine Girl</i>	Britt Nicole
2013	<i>Applause</i>	Lady Gaga
2014	<i>Revival</i>	Sara Evans
2017	<i>Smooth Like the Summer</i>	Thomas Rhett
2018	<i>All My Friends</i>	The Revivalists

RHYTHM device #3

**MAIN GROOVE
TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED**

In the previous songs, we have heard how effective the abrupt break of stop time can be in creating a quick focal point. However, sometimes the interruption of the instrumental and rhythmic flow is more subtle over a longer period of several bars or an entire section. The **main rhythm groove is temporarily suspended**, replaced by a thinner, simpler texture. This would be a typical scenario for most pop songs:

Verse — MAIN RHYTHM GROOVE is established

The main rhythm groove often features

- **Drums with a backbeat** (often with **heavy bass kick drum** playing steady quarter notes on the beat)
- **A bass line**
- Some type of **rhythm pattern on a chording instrument**. (often a steady 8th-note pulse with guitar strum or synth chords)

Pre-Chorus — MAIN GROOVE is SUSPENDED

- The **instrumental texture thins** out with minimal drums & bass. Often there is no backbeat
- The **rhythm pattern becomes more deliberate**, with the chording instrument often switching to whole note chords.
- The **overall effect is one of coasting** — like the gears of the main rhythmic engine have just become disconnected for a few bars. Usually the vocals continue during this part and the chords keep changing underneath the melody. **Tension** is created as we anticipate the return of the groove.

Chorus — MAIN GROOVE RETURNS

Then, at the entrance of the chorus, the energy of the main groove returns, giving us a satisfying resolution.

Lady Gaga's 2013 hit "Donatella" is a great example of this kind of rhythmic suspension. During the pre-chorus the heavy, driving groove is cut loose, and the song briefly floats like a glider with a light, ethereal sound for 6 bars. At 1:01 the glider gently comes to rest and we wait for 2 more bars . . . anticipating the return of the main instrumental pattern and the rhythmic resolution.

"Donatella" — Lady Gaga — 2013

A minor



- **0:19** (verse) **MAIN GROOVE** starts with heavy synth bass & kick drum, then adds treble synth chords
- **0:49** (pre-chorus) **RHYTHM GROOVE SUSPENDED**
 - NO synth bass, kick drum
 - Synth switches to lighter piano sound
 - Light percussion continues
 - Airy, reverbed vocal adds to floating feeling
- **1:03** Everything shuts down like a soft stop time **TENSION**
- **1:05** (chorus) **RESOLUTION**
 - **MAIN GROOVE RETURNS** in rhythm with
 - Song title
 - Highest melody note

The next song has a more subtle change from verse to pre-chorus. Unlike the previous example, the overall volume, energy, and fullness remain during the groove suspension. At the beginning of the pre-chorus, the driving 8th-notes of the bass and the quarter-note thumps from the kick drum once again disappear, but this time the energy dramatically transfers to the treble synth and a shimmering drone of 16th notes (see score below). The groove suspension is capped off with a brief stop time, marking the chorus entrance and the return of the main groove. Start listening at **0:57**.

"Lifted Up (1985)" – Passion Pit – 2015

F major

**0:57 END OF VERSE**

Bb (synth) **C**

MAIN GROOVE (bass)

1:05 PRE-CHORUS

Bb (shimmering synth texture) **F**

INSTRUMENTAL GROOVE SUSPENDED (minimal bass)

C **Dm** **C**

TENSION

STOP TIME (2nd time)

1:21 CHORUS**RESOLUTION****MAIN GROOVE RETURNS** (rhythm like verse above)

The groove suspension on the next Taylor Swift song is only half as long (4 bars) as the previous examples, but equally effective.

"Style" – Taylor Swift – 2014

ver - B min, ch - D maj



- **0:20** (verse) **MAIN GROOVE** with
 - heavy kick drum quarter notes
 - bass
 - chugging synth chords and treble guitar on 16th pulse

- **0:50** (pre-chorus) **INSTRUMENTAL GROOVE SUSPENDED**

- NO bass or drum
- NO chugging synth chords
- lighter piano plays whole note chords
- treble guitar 16th strum continues

TENSION

- **1:00** (chorus)

RESOLUTION

MAIN GROOVE RETURNS in rhythm

The next song has a signature bass riff that functions as a hook phrase. This is like some of the songs we listened to in Chapter One with signature guitar riffs. It also has not one, but two focal point sections - both created by suspending the main groove. As we have seen on many examples, a focal point occurs at the entrance of the chorus. However, on this song another focal point is created at the end of the chorus leading back to the verse.

"Expressway to Your Heart" - Soul Survivors - 1967

F# major



- **0:10** (verse 1) **MAIN GROOVE** Signature bass riff & drums with a choppy rhythm.

- **0:29** (pre-chorus) **INSTRUMENTAL GROOVE SUSPENDED**

- bass riff & drums disappear
- choppy rhythm is replaced with a smooth organ sound

DRUM FILL

TENSION

— 0:43 (chorus) **MAIN GROOVE RETURNS** with signature riff and song title

RESOLUTION

— 0:51 (end of chorus) **INSTRUMENTAL GROOVE SUSPENDED** again.

DRUM FILL

TENSION

— 1:10 (verse 2) **MAIN GROOVE RETURNS** with signature riff

RESOLUTION

Additional songs with MAIN GROOVE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

1969	<i>Maxwell's Silver Hammer</i>	The Beatles
1972	<i>Listen to the Music</i>	The Doobie Brothers
1998	<i>Cruel Summer</i>	Ace of Base
2005	<i>Crying Shame</i>	Jack Johnson
2014	<i>Sing</i>	Ed Sheeran
2016	<i>We Don't Talk Anymore</i>	Charlie Puth feat. Selena Gomez
2017	<i>No Distraction</i>	Beck
2017	<i>Swish Swish</i>	Katy Perry feat. Nicki Minaj
2018	<i>Get Out</i>	Chvrches
2019	<i>Supalonely</i>	BENEE, Gus Dapperton
2020	<i>Hallucinate</i>	Dua Lipa
2023	<i>Rush</i>	Troye Sivan



Some dance-pop songs feature a section where the main groove is initially suspended, but the energy gradually builds back to the previous level right before the main groove returns. On songs like these, the end of the groove suspension sometimes features drum notes that gradually change from quarters to 8ths to 16ths, almost acting like a long, extended drum fill leading to the focal point. Although the tempo and placement of the beats is technically the same, the **underlying pulse gets faster** thanks to changing divisions of the beat.

The following 2013 hit by Lady Gaga illustrates this pulse increase during the song's pre-chorus:

"Applause" — Lady Gaga — 2013

G minor



- **0:13** (verse) **MAIN GROOVE** Choppy rhythm with synth chords, bass, and full drums
 - **0:41** (pre-chorus) **INSTRUMENTAL GROOVE SUSPENDED**
 - volume drops, drums become very faint,
 - overall timbre is muted (EQ change)
 - choppy synth rhythm is replaced with a smooth organ sound
 - **0:45** volume increases, timbre becomes brighter (back to normal EQ),
PULSE INCREASES - drum notes change from quarters, to 8ths, to 16ths.
- TENSION**
- brief **STOP TIME**
- **0:55** (chorus) **RESOLUTION** **MAIN GROOVE** returns

The next song features the same type of pulse increases in the snare, but there is initially no groove suspension. The song starts with just minimal rhythm (only a synth “hand clap” on the backbeat), and the energy and tension then gradually build when the pulse increases start. At the entrance of the chorus the main groove is finally introduced.

"Let's Go" — Calvin Harris feat. Ne-Yo — 2012

E minor



- **0:07** (verse) with “hand clap” backbeat (synth)
- **0:32** pulsing synth chord emerges in background, increasing in volume
- **0:37** snare drum starts **STEADY QUARTER-NOTE PULSE**
- **0:45** Snare switches to **FASTER 8th-NOTE PULSE**
- **0:49** Snare **PULSE INCREASES to 16ths** creating extra **TENSION**
STOP TIME w song title
- **0:52** (chorus) **RESOLUTION** **MAIN GROOVE** starts with heavy bass and kick drum quarter-notes.



Another way to create some tension leading to a focal point is to start with a “**disjointed**” rhythm pattern in the verse or pre-chorus and resolve to a more “**solid**” pattern for the chorus. In this case, “disjointed” basically means no backbeat. (The “backbeat” is a hallmark of virtually all pop and rock songs, consisting of accents on beats 2 and 4 in 4/4 meter.) The disjointed section may also have prominent off-beat accents, which creates tension and an unbalanced or uneasy feeling that resolves when the familiar and steady backbeat returns.

Fleetwood Mac's song "Go Your Own Way" illustrates this rhythmic contrast. Drummer Mick Fleetwood plays a repeating rhythm (shown below) that features both snare and toms, but no backbeat.



This rhythm pattern would not be considered disjointed in some other settings, but in this song it is at odds with the flow of the vocal melody, creating tension that is resolved when the chorus finally enters with a solid backbeat on the snare.

"Go Your Own Way" — Fleetwood Mac — 1977

ver - F major
ch - D minor



- **0:11** (verse) Drums enter with a **DISJOINTED PATTERN** that has no backbeat.

TENSION

- **0:32** (chorus) **RESOLUTION** The snare starts playing a **STEADY, SOLID BACKBEAT** on 2 & 4, with a much smoother feeling.

The disjointed pattern is somewhat different on the next example by The Doobie Brothers, but the effect is still the same, as tension on the verse gives way to a resolved feeling on the chorus.

"Takin' It to the Streets" - Doobie Brothers - 1976

C major



- **0:00** (verse) Drums start with the following **DISJOINTED PATTERN** that has no backbeat.



TENSION

- **0:52** (chorus) **RESOLUTION** The snare starts playing a **STEADY, SOLID BACKBEAT** with a much smoother feeling.

On the 1987 hit “Jacob’s Ladder,” there is an unbalanced feeling in the verse created by the snare hitting only on beat 4 (half of the backbeat), and an unusual bass pattern (shown below). The full backbeat starts already with the pre-chorus, but the irregular guitar strum (also shown below) still keeps the feeling uneasy. However, when the chorus enters, the guitar starts playing smoother whole notes and the rhythm seems perfectly in step with the lyrics - climbing Jacob’s ladder “rung by rung”.

“Jacob’s Ladder” - Huey Lewis & The News - 1987

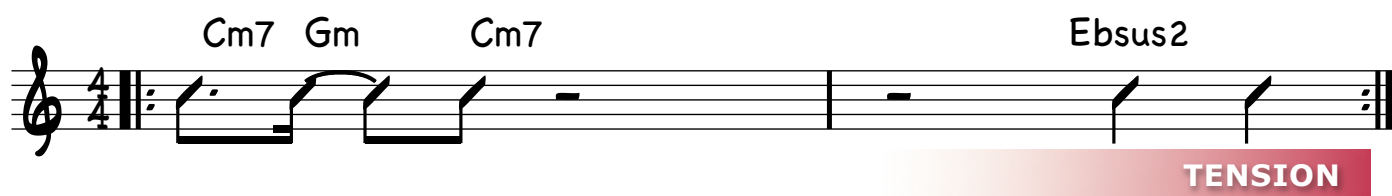
F major,
F mixo,
F blues rk



— **0:13** (verse) Snare hits only on beat 4 (half of the backbeat). Bass plays the following **DISJOINTED PATTERN**



— **0:37** (pre-chorus) Snare starts **FULL BACKBEAT** but the **DISJOINTED PATTERN** in the guitar strum keeps things uneasy.



— **0:45** (chorus) **RESOLUTION** **STEADY BACKBEAT** continues while guitar switches to smoother pattern.

The next song from the Police features an interesting but unsettling tug of war between downbeats and upbeats. The music opens with what seems like an extreme example of syncopation, as all the chord hits are on the upbeats. There is still a subtle backbeat from the kick drum on 2 and 4, and if you focus on that you will stay grounded. However, the upbeat chords remain constant, and last much longer than typical

syncopation. If you try to focus only on the chord hits and ignore the kick drum, the beat will actually flip, and you will hear the chord hits as the new downbeat. This aural illusion lasts until the chorus, when the upbeat chord hits disappear and the snare plays a stronger backbeat, putting us back on solid ground.

"Spirits in the Material World" - Police - 1982

ver - A major
ch - D dorian



- **0:15** (verse) There is a subtle backbeat from the kick drum, but a **DISJOINTED PATTERN** in the chords - all chord hits are on the upbeats.
- **0:24** The upbeat accents are so strong and last for so long that we have a disoriented feeling. It seems as though the beat is flipping, and the chords hits are becoming the new downbeat. **TENSION**
- **0:42** (chorus) **RESOLUTION** The upbeat chord hits disappear and the snare plays a **STRONGER BACKBEAT** giving us a feeling of resolution.

Here's one last example of a rhythmic contrast from disjointed to solid. On Paul Simon's "Have a Good Time," there is a meter change from verse to chorus. The verse is written in 7/4 time, and feels a bit unsettled as we try to find our way through the asymmetrical rhythm. (If you are having trouble counting, the words "yesterday" and "hung" are both on the downbeat of one.) We do feel more at ease, however, when the chorus enters with a familiar 4/4 at the **0:41** mark.

"Have a Good Time" — Paul Simon — 1975

Bb blues



- **0:08** (verse) Unusual 7/4 meter creates an **DISJOINTED FEELING**. **TENSION**
- **0:41** (chorus) **RESOLUTION** a more familiar rhythm with **STEADY, SOLID 4/4 METER**



FORM device #2

EXTENSION OF SECTION

In terms of length, song sections like verses and choruses are typically 8, 12, or 16 bars long, since these sections are usually made up of several smaller 4 or 8 bar phrases. When a phrase or section is **extended with an extra bar or two** — such as a 9-bar verse - it can create additional tension.

The 2018 song “All My Friends” by The Revivalists adds an extra 9th bar at the end of the verse. Also note that stop time and a drum fill increase the tension at this focal point. Start listening at **0:26**.

“All My Friends” – The Revivalists – 2018

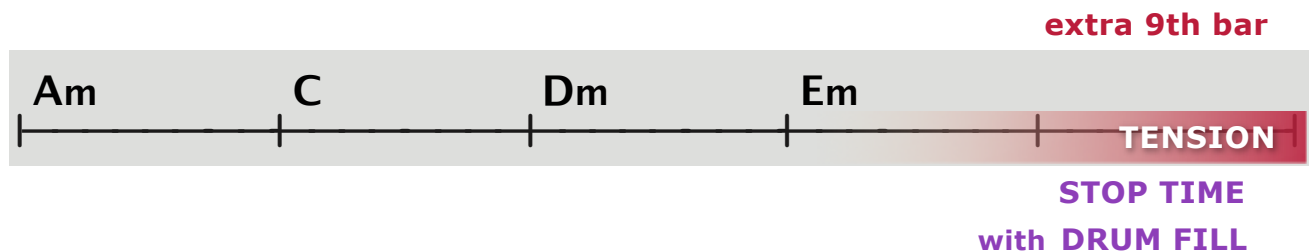
A minor



29



0:26 VERSE



0:50 CHORUS

On the next example by Katy Perry, the groove is suspended at the entrance to the pre-chorus, and a 2-bar extension is combined with stop time at the end of the pre-chorus.

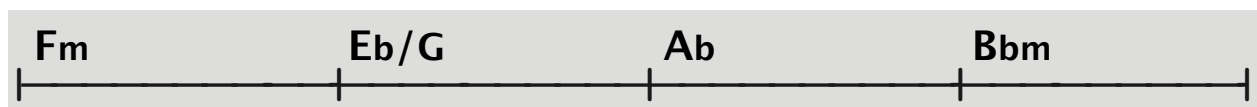
On this song the groove is created with a thumping bass kick drum, a fingersnap backbeat, and a repeated bass riff. All this disappears in the pre-chorus, replaced by simple whole note chords on piano. Start listening at **0:24**.

"Swish Swish" — Katy Perry feat. Nicki Minaj — 2017

F minor

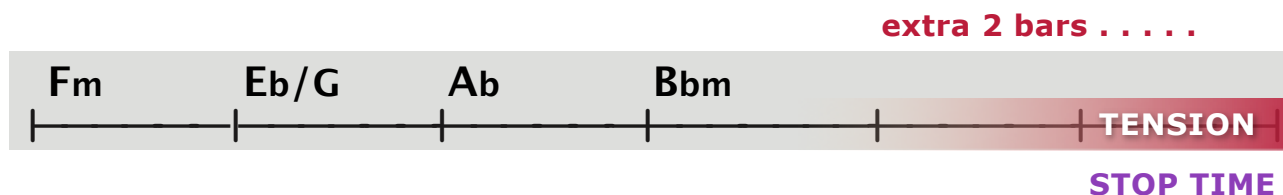


0:24 VERSE 2 GROOVE ESTABLISHED



RHYTHM GROOVE SUSPENDED

0:41 PRE-CHORUS



1:00 CHORUS GROOVE RETURNS

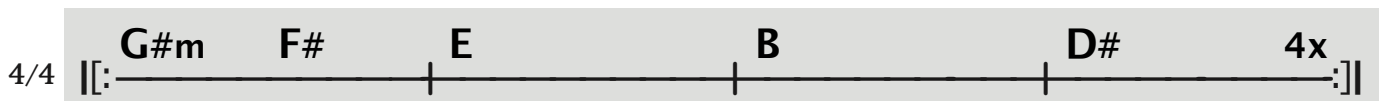
Here's an example where the groove isn't suspended until the 2 extra bars at the end of the verse. Start listening at **0:24**.

"Stolen Dance" — Milky Chance — 2014

G# minor



p.27



0:24 VERSE

extra 2 bars



GROOVE SUSPENDED

1:02 CHORUS

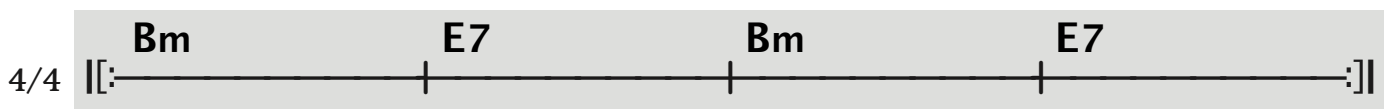
On this recent hit from Dua Lipa, the pre-chorus is only extended 2 extra beats (one 2/4 bar, shown below), as she sings the words “Watch me.” The extension is short, but still effective in creating tension before the chorus.

"Dance the Night" — Dua Lipa — 2023

B dorian



32



0:08 VERSE



0:26 PRE-CHORUS

2 extra beats



0:40 CHORUS

Additional songs with
EXTENSION of SECTION

1965	<i>Ticket to Ride</i>	The Beatles
1975	<i>When Will I Be Loved</i>	Linda Ronstadt
1984	<i>Jump</i>	Van Halen
1985	<i>Loverboy</i>	Billy Ocean
1989	<i>The Deeper the Love</i>	Whitesnake
1996	<i>The Distance</i>	Cake
1997	<i>When</i>	Shania Twain
2009	<i>My Life Would Suck Without You</i>	Kelly Clarkson
2011	<i>Set Fire to the Rain</i>	Adele
2012	<i>Right Back Atcha Babe</i>	Tim McGraw
2023	<i>Edge of the Earth</i>	The Beaches